

## Dungeness commercial shellfish closure: What's next?

The next step following the state Department of Health's closure of portions of commercial shellfish beds in Dungeness Bay is to develop and implement a closure response strategy. The 1994 *Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan* requires the development of a closure response strategy following a shellfish area downgrade. The response strategy will outline specific tasks and schedules and will help coordinate a multi-agency effort to address fecal coliform bacteria sources affecting shellfish beds in Dungeness Bay.

The state Department of Ecology (Ecology) is working on a related water cleanup plan for several streams that flow into the bay because they fail to meet state water quality standards for fecal coliform bacteria. The shellfish closure response strategy and water cleanup plan will be coordinated to reach a common goal – improving water quality in Dungeness Bay.



### Shellfish response process

The state Department of Health, Office of Food Safety and Shellfish Programs (State Health), is responsible for reclassifying shellfish areas where levels of fecal coliform bacteria have exceeded the water quality standard for commercial shellfish harvest. State Health issues the initial reclassification order and documentation report. After a 28-day appeal period, they issue a final order and the reclassification takes effect.

Under the 1994 *Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan*, state Health is required to initiate a closure response process following the downgrade of a shellfish area. State Health convenes a response group consisting of state and local agencies, tribes, and other interests. The response group identifies a lead agency and then works together to develop and implement a strategy to restore water quality in the affected area.

Under state law, Clallam County is required to form a shellfish protection district and establish a shellfish protection program within 180 days of the final order.

## Water cleanup planning

The federal Clean Water Act requires Ecology to develop water cleanup plans for water bodies in the state that do not meet state water quality standards. Waters in Matriotti and Meadowbrook Creeks, and the Dungeness River below Highway 101, do not meet state water quality standards for fecal coliform bacteria. For this reason, Ecology is conducting a water cleanup plan to control the sources of pollution.

Water from all three streams flows into the downgraded shellfish area, so the water cleanup plan is closely related to restoration in Dungeness Bay.

The first step in the water cleanup plan is a water quality study. The study identifies areas of the streams being polluted by sources of fecal coliform bacteria, and determines the amount of pollution reduction needed for a



healthy bay, streams, and river. Fecal coliform bacteria can get into water from many sources, including failing septic tanks, municipal stormwater runoff, runoff from agricultural areas or areas frequented by wildlife.

Ecology began the water quality study in the Dungeness watershed in November 1999. The technical report on the study is anticipated to be final in the summer of 2001.

Study results will then be used in developing the required water cleanup plan that will help these waters meet state water quality standards.

## Working together in our watershed

The water cleanup plan and shellfish closure response strategy have different legal requirements and timelines, but they will be integrated at the local level. The shellfish closure response strategy will include local actions that begin immediately. When Ecology's water quality study is complete, the response strategy may be adapted to incorporate study findings.

Staff from the departments of Health and Ecology have been working closely with local entities to ensure that these processes work together and are integrated with the considerable amount of related local effort ongoing in the Dungeness watershed.

## Contacts for more information

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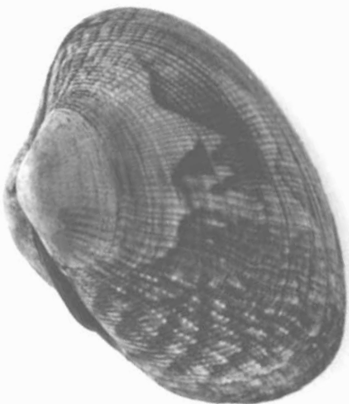
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For more information, check out the complete text of the Puget Sound plan, additional fact sheets about the update process, and information about the Action Team at [www.wa.gov/puget\\_sound](http://www.wa.gov/puget_sound) or call the Action Team at (360) 407-7300 or 1 (800) 54-SOUND. If you need these materials in an alternative format, call our TDD number 1-800-833-6388.